



## Journal of Jewish Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujje20>

### A Response to the Manpower Problem in Jewish Education

Irwin Schiff Alvin

Published online: 13 Mar 2008.

To cite this article: Irwin Schiff Alvin (1970) A Response to the Manpower Problem in Jewish Education, *Journal of Jewish Education*, 40:1, 36-41, DOI: [10.1080/15244117008547978](https://doi.org/10.1080/15244117008547978)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15244117008547978>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## A Response to the Manpower Problem in Jewish Education

Alvin Irwin Schiff

### THE PROBLEM

#### *Shortage of Instructional Personnel*

The number one problem in Jewish education is painfully obvious. For the purpose of this descriptive article, it will be stated briefly in order to focus clearly on all its dimensions.

There is a drastic shortage of *qualified* teachers in all types of Jewish schools and on all levels—pre-school, primary, elementary, secondary, adult, and higher education. The shortage is somewhat alleviated by the continuous influx of Israelis into the United States. For the most part, these teachers do not meet the religious requirements of the great majority of schools, particularly the Jewish Day Schools and the supplementary Orthodox and Conservative Hebrew schools. Many of the Israelis lack basic knowledge of Jewish religious life and observances and do not have the necessary pedagogic training nor the desired English language fluency for effective teaching in American schools. In addition, they generally do not have serious career commitment to Jewish edu-

cation and fail to understand and relate to American Jewish youth. They are either graduate students or businessmen (or spouses of students or businessmen) who plan to leave Jewish education as soon as their educational and/or professional goals are attained.

During the last decade, increasingly larger numbers of competent Israeli teachers have come annually to the United States for a stay of two or three years via the teacher exchange program sponsored jointly by the American Association for Jewish Education and the Departments of Education and Culture and Torah and Culture of the Jewish Agency. Currently, there are about 150 Israeli exchange teachers in the United States and Canada. These teachers help, in small measure, to alleviate the growing shortage of trained teachers.

There are two other sources from which institutional personnel are recruited—the Hebrew teacher training schools and the Orthodox rabbinic seminaries. The Hebrew teacher colleges produce a trickle of graduates who enter Jewish education. Indeed, several Hebrew colleges have eliminated the name “teacher” from their official school names. With the exception of the Teacher’s Institute for Women of

---

DR. SCHIFF is Professor of Education and Chairman of Jewish Education, Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yeshiva Univ.

Yeshiva University, less than 40% of all graduates of Hebrew teacher training schools enter Jewish education, even on a temporary basis or as a part-time profession, and only about half of this number become career educators. In all, between 30 to 40 career teachers a year are provided via the Hebrew colleges.

The third source for recruiting teachers is the rabbinical seminary. Each year approximately 150 dedicated young men are ordained by the various *mesivtot* in the United States. For the most part, they do not enter the rabbinate. Many of them choose careers in Jewish education. These young rabbis, while steeped in Jewish learning, usually lack several basic requisites for effective teaching in American Jewish schools. They have little or no pedagogic preparation. They have meager knowledge of the wider range of Jewish studies (*hochmat yisrael*), a poor command of spoken Hebrew; and, more often than not, their general educational background rarely extends beyond the high school level. In recognition of their particular needs, Torah Umesorah founded the Joseph Shapiro Teacher Training Institute (in 1963) to help prepare rabbinic students in five of the major seminaries for Hebrew Day School instruction. Since 1966 about 25 students have completed annually, a three-year supplementary program of studies in education and Jewish studies.

In addition to the foregoing sources of recruitment, the manpower shortage has been relieved, to a degree, by a variety of part-time or temporary personnel: housewives, public school teachers, other people seeking supplementary employment; and college and post-graduate students who find teaching a convenient way of self-support while preparing for another career. All the sources together far from satisfy the average annual need estimated at approximately 800 Jewish school teachers.

#### *Shortage of Jewish Secondary School Teachers*

While the shortage of qualified teaching personnel is severe on all levels of the Jewish school, it is most keenly felt in the Jewish secondary school, particularly in the supplementary Hebrew High Schools and the Hebraic Day Schools, Grades 7-12. Formal and informal surveys made by the American Association for Jewish Education, Yeshiva University and Torah Umesorah underscore the dimensions of this shortage.

Although efforts are now being made by the various Hebrew teachers colleges to produce more teachers for Jewish schools, these colleges do not provide adequate preparation for junior high and high school teaching. Neither can Israel be depended upon to supply competent secondary school teachers in sufficient numbers. The experience of several day school principals who recruit teachers directly from Israel demonstrates that secondary school teachers are becoming increasingly reluctant to leave Israel.

The seriousness of the shortage becomes magnified in light of the appalling lack of Jewish commitment and apathy to Jewish values of the overwhelming majority of Jewish college students. Jewish youth require inspiring competent teachers during the crucial period of their adolescent development. Young effective teachers are needed to serve as emulative models for their students, to provide a much-needed positive image for the Jewish school, and to attract more youth to continue beyond Bar Mitzvah.

#### *Shortage of Administrative Personnel*

With each passing year the need for competent supervisors and administrators increases. Many bureau positions and principalships go begging for want of qualified personnel. The Joint Personnel Committee of the American Association for Jewish Education and the National Council for Jewish Education has been unable, during the past few years, to find suitable replacements for retiring educational administrators and supervisors. Moreover, it has become increasingly difficult for this national recruitment committee to locate qualified people for new positions of educational leadership.

The shortage of Jewish Day School supervisors (many of whom are required to have preparation in both Jewish and general fields of education) is especially severe. The annual frustrating search by Torah Umesorah, the Department of Yeshivot of the Jewish Education Committee, and Yeshiva University's Placement office for qualified principals is adequate testimony to the severity of the lack of personnel in this crucial area of Jewish education.

#### *Shortage of Academic and Research Personnel*

Jewish education in America is exposed fully to the problems and progress of general educa-

tion. In the problems of public education it can take little consolation. Via its progress, Jewish schools see, all the more clearly, their own shortcomings. Whereas in public education there is a growing body of literature in all spheres of educational endeavor, there is an embarrassing lack of research in Jewish education.

In general education there is a plethora of research about the instructional program—educational technology, curriculum development and the teaching of exceptional children. In administration, there is ongoing research in school organization, teacher-personnel management, business administration and public relations. In the area of supervision, studies are being conducted in evaluation and measurement, rating and reporting, teacher training and teacher growth. The problems of the pupil are researched via studies in child development and pupil personnel services. The foundations of education receive attention in research about history and philosophy of education, comparative education and educational sociology.

In Jewish education there is almost no research on comparable areas. Moreover, with the exception of a few studies, there is a remarkable lack of objective information about the development of Jewish education in America and about its present status. There is little scientific data about the relative effectiveness of the various types of Jewish schools, and about the efficacy of the different methods of instruction used in Jewish schools. Whatever information exists about achievement and methodology is based, to a large degree, on surmise and subjective judgment.

One of the reasons for the lack of basic research in Jewish education is the shortage of trained researchers sufficiently interested in the Jewish school to conduct studies in this

important area of Jewish life and activity.

In the realm of scholarship, another basic shortage is clearly evident—the lack of qualified young educators to teach Jewish education in the Hebrew teacher training schools and rabbinic seminaries.

### Conclusion

Sound Jewish education is a *sine qua non* for creative Jewish living on this continent. Consequently, the preparation of competent teachers, supervisors, administrators and academicians assumes a position of unmatched importance and absolute priority on the American Jewish scene. Educational leadership, in particular, is sorely needed to assure the self-perpetuation and growth of the Jewish community in America.

Since the answer to the problem of personnel and leadership in American Jewish education is not forthcoming from European lands nor from Israel, the American Jewish community must provide its own four-fold solution:

- 1) the large-scale training of qualified Jewish elementary teachers;
- 2) the specialized training of competent Jewish secondary school instructors;
- 3) the effective preparation of knowledgeable supervisors, administrators, researchers and educationists; and
- 4) the intensive education of a select group of highly qualified personnel who will become emulative models for the profession and eventually provide instructional leadership.

It is to this multi-dimensional solution—particularly to the last three phases of the solution—that the Department of Jewish Education of the Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Yeshiva University seeks to make a vital contribution.

### THE RESPONSE

#### Premises

The response of the Department of Jewish Education of the Ferkauf Graduate School to the manpower problem in Jewish education is based upon the following premises:

1. Well-prepared, knowledgeable and committed young teachers and supervisors can effect significant changes and upgrade

substantially Jewish education in America.

2. Educators (with advanced degrees), who have commitment to and specialized advanced preparation for careers in Jewish education, will help to raise the image of the Jewish school and the Jewish teaching profession.
3. In contrast with the career choices of graduates of undergraduate Hebrew col-

leges\*, the career choice of students pursuing a course of study on the post-bachelor's level is likely to be related to their degree work.

4. To achieve effective instructional leadership, the expanding horizons of Jewish knowledge and the increasing need for pedagogic expertise require teachers in Jewish schools to receive extensive preparation beyond the bachelor's level.
5. Teachers of adolescents need specific pedagogic training and advanced knowledge of Hebraica to meet effectively the challenge of their calling.
6. Administrators and supervisors require intensive specialized preparation to meet the challenges of their profession in contemporary society.

#### *Role of the Department of Jewish Education*

In response to the personnel crisis, the Department has developed, since 1965, three state-approved interdisciplinary degree programs designed to prepare teachers and supervisors for Jewish schools. Currently, pre-doctoral and doctoral programs are being planned for the training of researchers and college-level instructors of Judaica and Jewish education.

The Department enjoys the advantage—unique to schools of higher Jewish learning—of being an integral part of a university in which instructional and supervisory personnel, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers and group workers are trained for the general and Jewish communities. In addition to Jewish oriented coursework, course offerings by other departments in the various fields of psychology, guidance and general education are integrated into the Jewish education programs. Moreover, the resources of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work and the research facilities, laboratories, psychological clinic, audiovisual center and general and Judaic libraries of the University are available to faculty and students.

#### *Elementary Education Program*

The first program to be initiated was the Master of Science Degree Program in Jewish

Elementary Education (in 1965).

G geared to prepare students for careers in Jewish elementary education and to improve the effectiveness of teachers currently serving in Jewish elementary schools, it comprises coursework selected from five fields of study: Historical, Philosophical and Social Foundations of Jewish Education; Methods and Materials of Jewish Education; Jewish Studies; Psychology; and General Educational Methodology.

#### *Secondary Education Program*

To be effective, Jewish secondary school teachers in America need a variety of skills. They must have advanced knowledge in one or more fields of Hebraica-Judaica and better than average background in all Jewish study areas. They must be fluent in Hebrew. They must have a basic understanding of adolescents; their behavior patterns, their study habits and the problems Jewish adolescents face in a rapidly changing society. They need to master the techniques of secondary school instruction and to acquire the ability to keep abreast of, and adapt new media in their teaching. They must develop the wherewithal to open up the minds of Jewish youth to the treasures of Judaism and to inspire them with a love of learning, of Jewish tradition and of Israel. Via their training, teachers must acquire an ever-deepening sense of commitment to the Jewish educational profession and an ever-increasing appreciation of its value to Jewish life.

The course of studies for the Master of Science degree in Jewish Secondary Education (begun in 1967) has been designed to achieve the above goals. Applicants meeting the admission requirements pursue coursework in the five fields of study outlined above (in the M.S. degree program in Jewish Elementary Education) with particular focus on Judaica, adolescent psychology and pedagogy for secondary schooling.

#### *The Education of Supervisors and Administrators*

During the past three decades, industrial management and administration of general education have developed as specialized disciplines which include both theoretic and practical components. Jewish education should benefit from the experience of these professions. To function adequately, a Jewish school

\* See, Schiff, Alvin I., "The Students of the Hebrew Teachers College: Profile and Career Choice", in *The Education of American Jewish Teachers* (Oscar I. Janowsky, editor), Boston Beacon Press, 1967, p. 83-110.

supervisor or administrator must have both the conceptual background and the operational know-how of administration and supervision.

1) Jewish school supervisors must provide leadership in personnel management. Research studies in this area have shown the importance of a) understanding individual and group behavior, b) developing skill in human relations, and c) self-evaluation.

2) Evidence from research indicates that leadership in instructional services is basic to effective supervision. Principals must be able to evaluate teacher performance and encourage teacher growth via ongoing pedagogic guidance. To perform adequately as a supervisor, one must

- a) have good understanding of instructional processes and methodological procedures;
- b) be able to establish curriculum goals and initiate and guide the development of school curricula;
- c) have skill to initiate and conduct evaluation of curricular outcomes;
- d) have ability to conceptualize instructional problems effectively; and
- e) be able to initiate and guide experimentation in Jewish education.

3) Jewish educational administrators must provide leadership in business management. Adequate finance and proper facilities are two major problems in Jewish education. To perform effectively as a principal, one must be able to plan a school budget effectively, administer it efficiently and provide or adapt facilities for the educational program.

4) Jewish school administrators must provide leadership to the Jewish community and to the Jewish teaching profession. They must be able to interpret Jewish religious and cultural traditions as well as the school program to the community. The Jewish educational leader must know the American Jewish community in all its various ramifications in order to be able to

- a) establish a meaningful public relations program;
- b) interpret the Jewish school program to the community;
- c) work with Jewish educational agencies; and
- d) gain Jewish community support for Jewish education.

5) A Jewish educational administrator must be highly knowledgeable about contemporary Jewish education and have a sound background in Jewish studies including Bible, Talmud and

their respective commentaries, Jewish history, Jewish philosophy, liturgy, Israel, Hebrew language and literature.

6) To make a lasting contribution to the field of Jewish education, Jewish school leaders must be able to do research in Jewish education, particularly on the status of contemporary Jewish education, curriculum planning and evaluation, scholastic achievement, pupil attitudes, effectiveness of instructional media, evaluation of special projects and appraisal of supervisory practices. Competence for this kind of task can best be attained by training in research methodology and the actual conducting of research under expert guidance.

7) Research studies show the importance of primary experience in the preparation of supervisors and administrators. A person preparing for a career in supervision and administration must have adequate opportunities for application of theory in order to develop the necessary skills. This may be accomplished on three levels of experience:

- a) analysis of case studies in education,
- b) field service, and
- c) internship.

#### *Administration and Supervision Program*

In light of the above *desiderata*, the doctoral program derives from a multi-based focus on leadership in instruction, curriculum design and evaluation, personnel management, business administration, social action, Jewish scholarship and educational research. Supervised laboratory experience is an integral part of students' preparation.

The Ed.D. program comprises coursework including such offerings as Social and Psychological Perspectives of Jewish Youth, Sociology of the American Jewish Community, Contemporary Philosophy of Education Curriculum Design and New Teaching Media. The core of courses in educational administration and supervision include offerings in Laboratory in Group Development, Theories of Organization, Practices and Problems in School Administration, Internship in Jewish Education, and Seminars in Supervision of Jewish Day Schools and Jewish Supplementary Schools.

In addition, Ed.D. students take seminars in Modern Israel, Contemporary Jewish Thought, Problems of Modern Jewish History and The Bible in Light of Modern Archaeology, and research methodology.

### Recruitment of Students

We live in an age of educational funding and heightened competition for collegiate and post-graduate talent. To be successful, any graduate program that hopes to attract students must be able to "offer them a good deal". This is the reality of contemporary life. The Jewish community cannot afford to ignore it. As a consequence of providing a "good deal" for prospective Jewish teachers the Jewish community will improve the prospects of its education enterprise.

While prospective elementary school teachers can be recruited generally from among average students, future secondary-level instructors and potential supervisors must come from better-than-average and superior youth and young adults. To attract such calibre candidates, programs in Jewish Education must compete with other graduate professional programs in (a) quality of programs, (b) post-program job opportunities, and (c) pre-program incentives.

In meeting the first of these challenges—program quality—the Department is guided by two factors: the standards of a first-rate graduate school of humanities and social sciences, and the realization that only a program of excellence can truly help to upgrade Jewish education in the United States.

The second—job opportunity in terms of adequate compensation for teaching and professional growth potential—is a responsibility which the American Jewish community must shoulder concomitantly with its responsibility for the training of competent personnel. This is a long-range challenge, which, hopefully, can be met during the next decade.

The third phase, competition with other professional university offerings, concerns the financial aid provided by programs in Jewish education. If a potential applicant to a Jewish education program is torn between a decision to enter Jewish secondary education or to teach social studies in a general high school, he might

well choose the latter—other things being equal—if he can easily receive (or is asked to accept) university-funded or government supported scholarship or fellowship—in social studies teaching. Scholarships and fellowships are available in virtually all areas of graduate study. Jewish educator-training programs must be able to compete with other graduate programs in this vital area.

Scholarship and fellowship aid is important for yet another reason. The MS programs in Jewish elementary education and Jewish secondary education attract graduates of Hebrew teachers colleges, young talented Jewish elementary school teachers and young ordained rabbis who otherwise would enter other fields of endeavor. These are employed in one or two positions which consume most or all of their working day. They cannot afford to give up part of their earning capacity (which, *in toto*, is relatively quite minimal and, in addition, pay for schooling in order to enhance their teaching skill and enrich their background.

Similarly, doctoral candidates cannot be expected to forego their source of income or a good portion of it to pursue an advanced degree. While many young educators may regard it as a worthwhile investment, a doctoral program is often too expensive for their tastes.

If the young people who might qualify to enter Jewish education programs are not attracted to them, this would mean a double loss to the Jewish community. In the first instance, they will not enter or continue in Jewish education. Secondly, their background and training until the point of readiness to begin graduate study—which represents the communal investment made in them—will fall into disuse when they enter other vocations. While it is true that literate, cultured *baale batim* are needed, the unquestioned priority at this juncture in American Jewish history is for adequately trained, competent and inspiring Jewish educators.